

APPLYING GOOGLE TRANSLATE IN PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

Technology increases rapidly in the last years. It is signed by the use of computer and internet in everyday life. Some years ago, it was not easy to have even to operate a computer, and it was difficult to search for internet connection. But today is different where computer is everywhere and so is the internet. Many experts compete to create new technologies both tools and programs or applications by using these two objects as the bases.

Through the increase of technology, Balleden in Hartoyo (2012, 19) states that the development of computer technology makes impact not only to the daily life, but also to education. Even Maddison in Hartoyo (2012, 19) argues that the technology of education and the technology of communication are two side of the same coin. A parable which means teaching and learning activities cannot be separated with the technology. Whenever we talk about development of technology, there we also talk about the development of education.

In order that technology and education walk in line, all are related to education, especially the teachers, need to develop both method and their capability to use media in teaching and learning instruction. Hartoyo (2012, 1) strengthens that the use of ICT is a must in sustaining language learning. It can enhance not only the effectiveness and quality of education, but also can improve the ICT literacy both for teachers and students as their life skill in the era quickly changing and progressing technology.

Relate to the use of ICT in language learning, this paper tries to discuss about applying Google Translate in pronunciation teaching. Why should Google Translate? This will be very interesting and challenging to do because all people know that Google Translate is a translator program. However, there are some features provided in Google Translate which relate to the use of sound that can be utilized in pronunciation teaching. Then, pronunciation teaching is chosen

because it is very important for the students that can enhance their ability to speak infinitely (Harmer 2001, 183). On the other hand, so many teachers, especially non-native speakers, do not feel confident to teach pronunciation because of its difficulties (Fraser 2000, 8; Gilbert 2008, 42-43). Moreover, they think that pronunciation teaching will only make thing worse (Harmer 2001, 183).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the background of study and the problem above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To discuss the effectiveness of applying Google Translate in supporting pronunciation teaching.
2. To discuss the impact will get by teachers and students by applying Google Translate.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. The Importance of Pronunciation Teaching

Pronunciation refers to the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is spoken. Because it relates to spoken language, there are two interrelated skills in pronunciation; those are recognition or understanding the flow of speech, and production or fluency in the spoken language (Broughton, et al 1980, 49). Pronunciation also refers to the making of sounds to create meaning. It includes attention to the specific sounds of a language, aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound like intonation, stress, rhythm, how the voice is projected (voice quality), and in its broadest definition, attention to gestures and expressions that are closely related to the way we speak a language.

Since sounds play an important role in spoken language, foreign language teachers have to take pronunciation teaching as the main activity in their classes. As we know that communication is a mutual relationship

between the speaker and the listener. This indicates that the listener should understand what he/she hears in the target language and then he/she can produce the sounds of the language he/she is learning accurately. Unless he has sufficient knowledge of the sound patterns of the target language, he can neither encode a message to anybody nor decode the message sent by another person by learning the sounds of the target language within his mother tongue.

Pronunciation teaching itself becomes rather incidental to a course of study by the mid of 1980s. With greater attention to grammatical structures as significant basics in discourse, to balance between fluency and accuracy, and to the explicit specification of pedagogical tasks that a student should accomplish, it becomes clear that pronunciation was a key to gaining full communicative competence (Brown 2000, 283). So, teachers should include pronunciation teaching in courses and expect students to do well (Morley 1991). By teaching pronunciation to the students, it will be very useful for them to become more familiar with the sounds of language (English) and it will also be very useful to achieve the goal of pronunciation itself which will be discuss below.

B. The Objective of Pronunciation Teaching

Because pronunciation has strong relationship to spoken language, it is not enough for teachers to teach pronunciation only theoretically about what pronunciation is, what kinds of phonemes are, and so on. The most important thing is how the students can pronounce each word. However, it is different to writing which structurally and grammatically has to be in the correct form, spoken language does not emphasize on them. It is true that spoken language also has to be correct, but not grammatically. The correctness and accuracy in spoken language refer to the way in which the words are pronounced.

Many teachers probably think that the ultimate goal of their students in pronunciation should be accent-free speech that is identical from that of a native speaker. Nonetheless, with the rapid spread of English as an international language, native accent has become almost inappropriate to cross-cultural communication. Therefore, the goal of teaching pronunciation should be more realistically focused on developing functional intelligibility, communicability, increased self-confidence, the development of speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom (Morley 1991, 498-500), clear and comprehensible pronunciation (Brown 2000, 284). It is quite possible for students to be trained to pronounce language in a way that is easily intelligible to native speakers without asking that their pronunciation has to be like a native speaker (Fraser 2000, 10).

Similar to Brown and Fraser, Harmer indicates the need for English teachers to consider intelligibility as the main objective of pronunciation teaching because the students, who are as foreign language speakers, commonly want to preserve their own accent when they speak the foreign language since that is part of their identities (Harmer 2001, 184). Moreover, Gilbert (2008, 1) states that the aim of pronunciation teaching does not mean that students have to sound like native speakers, but it helps them to learn the basic elements of spoken English in order that they can be easily comprehended by others. Thus, even the students make error grammatically, it is better for them to have good pronunciation because their speaking is comprehended. On the other hand, their speaking will be difficult to be understood if they have poor pronunciation even when their grammar is excellent (Fraser 2000, 7).

In other words, teachers and students can defeat the difficulties often related to pronunciation by focusing their attention on the improvement of pronunciation which is “listener friendly”, so pronunciation teaching refers to learning and practicing the particularly English way of making a speakers’ thoughts easy to follow.

C. Some Features of Google Translate

The writer believes that most of us have known what Google Translate is. Hearing to the name, Google Translate is a free statistical multilingual machine-translation service provided by Google Inc. to translate written text, word and sentence, from one language into another language. Talking about the languages provided, there are more than 70 languages can be translated by using Google Translate. The number which is quite much and it is increasingly from time to time. The writer does believe that Google Inc. will provide more languages to this program in the next time.

In addition, Google Translate has a "text-to-speech" audio function which is able to read back a text in that language. Because of so much different languages, the accent used in this tool depends on the region. For English, female General American accent is used in the American and some other countries such as Israel, while in Europe and all other parts of the world a male British English accent is used. For Spanish, a Latin American Spanish accent is used, whereas in the other parts of the world a Castilian Spanish accent is used. Portuguese uses a São Paulo accent in the world, except for Portugal, where their native accent is used. For other less popular languages, the audio is a jumbled boring unclearly male low-quality voice.

Besides the translation machine as the main tool and its ability to read the text by using "text-to-speech", the other feature of Google Translate is it provides voice input. Through the voice input, we do not need to type any words or sentences, but we just need to say the words or sentences we mean. After finish saying the words or sentences, the words or sentences we have just said will appear in the available box.

However, like other automatic translation tools, Google Translate has limitations which it does not always give exact result of translations for all languages provided. On the other hand, it also does not always show the bad result of translation. Google Translate functions well especially when English is the target language and the source language is one of the languages of the European Union. Refer to the analyses were reported in 2010, the translation result from French to English is relatively accurate and in 2011 and 2012 showing that Italian to English translation is relatively accurate as well. However, the shorter the text translated is better than the longer one; this effect is particularly evident in Chinese to English translations. Even though, the writer believe these limitations are not problem because what will the writer use here is not the translation result, but the writer will use its voice input instead of typing the words and also its “text-to-speech” feature.

D. Applying Google Translate in Pronunciation Teaching

The tools and program we need to apply Google Translate is so simple. Before utilizing Google Translate as the media in teaching pronunciation, make sure that we have installed Google Chrome because it has provided with voice input where other web browsers have not been provided yet. To input our voice to the computer, laptop or notebook, the tool we can use is earphone which has microphone or we can also use mobile phone’s earphone.

To start the activity, open Google Chrome then type “Google Translate”. By clicking Google Translate, the translation page will appear. Then on the screen, we will see a source language which marked with “from” and a target language which marked with “to”. It means from what language we will translate to one other language the translation will be resulted.

The next step is choosing the source language. Because we are teaching English, surely we have to set the source language from English. Click the source language button and choose “English”. Then we will see the

source and target language exchange. What about the target language? No need to worry the target language since we will not focus on the translation. Here we are focusing on how the voice input works to detect our voice.

After setting the source language, we may start saying whatever we want, but we cannot do it directly. Before saying anything, we need to click the symbol of a microphone on the left bottom. We may say after appearing “speak now”. Then, we will see the result in the available box. Here is the ability of Google Translate to detect and to recognize the voice. When we say the word(s) in correct English pronunciation, Google Translate will show the result correctly.

In addition to use computer or laptop, the easiest way we will get if we use our mobile phone especially for Android OS mobile phones because Google Translate is available as a free downloadable application for that OS. We can speak directly toward the mobile phone without using the earphone. About the internet connection, Android OS has connected directly to the internet, so no need to worry searching for the internet connection. The way in which we use the mobile phone is quite similar to when we use computer or laptop. We have to set the source language and we can say the word(s) after clicking the microphone button.

As the students’ first exercise, we can write a word on whiteboard and ask them to say the word by utilizing their microphone or mobile phone. If what they see in the available box is the same as what is written on the whiteboard, it means that they can say the word correctly. But when the word appears is not the same, it indicates the students say the word inappropriately. We can start the lesson from the easiest one the most difficult one, or we can also start from word to sentence.

ANALYSIS

Even though its main function is as translator program, however, there are some strengths of applying Google Translate in pronunciation teaching, those are:

1. The easiness to get the tools and application

The tools are simple in which we can use our PC or our mobile phone which provided with Android OS. Besides, no need to install difficult software or program, Google Translate is easy to find because we just need to type the keyword in the web browser. If we use Android OS mobile phone, Google Translate is easy to find in Google Play and the installation is also very simple.

2. The ability to improve students' desire to speak English

Voice input can be used as the way to practice students' ability in pronunciation. By using the example of practice above, students will try hard to speak again and again when they realize that the word or sentence appears is not suitable to what written by the teacher. If finally what they say is the same as what the teacher writes, the writer does believe that the students will feel challenged to say another word or sentence.

3. The availability of how the way native speaker pronounces the word(s).

It is very helpful especially for the teachers who feel unconfident in teaching pronunciation. With the availability of text-to-speech, students can use this feature to know the native speaker's voice, stress, and also intonation. Firstly, the teachers may ask the students to type word(s), and then click the sound symbol (not the microphone). After clicking the sound symbol, students

will hear the voice saying what they have typed, and teachers can ask the students to follow saying what they hear.

4. The ability to use not only to pronounce a word but also sentence(s).

There are some other programs which are provided by text-to-speech such as Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary, and so on. Nevertheless, most of them can only pronounce a word. Yet, Google Translate can pronounce not only a word, but also a sentence, even a paragraph. Of course it is very useful to make the students get use to hear the native speakers pronunciation.

5. The ability to be used individually

By using Google Translate, students can learn and practice individually how to pronounce the word(s) anywhere and anytime they want without the teacher. It is because Google Translate has been provided with text-to-speech which is able to guide or give them the way to say the word(s).

6. The ability to check how many mistakes made by students

Teacher is able to check how many mistakes made by students by looking at the history. There, Google Translate will show all results relate to what have done by students. Moreover, teacher is also able to know the improvement of students' ability through this history. For example, firstly the students need to try until ten times to say the word "purple" correctly, but in the second chance, they can say that word correctly only in three times, it indicates the improvement reached by students.

7. The ability to improve students' skill to pronounce the word(s) correctly

Quite similar to the reason in point (4), it relates to the awareness of students when they are trying to say the word(s). They will improve their

pronunciation skill after they find the correct pronunciation of that word(s). Referring to the saying that practice makes perfect, the writer believes if the students keep trying to say the English word(s) more and more, they can improve their ability well. Here, Google Translate is used like pronunciation checker tool.

Besides the strengths mentioned above, surely there are also some weaknesses of Google Translate, such as:

1. It should be used only in a very quite condition

The noisy situation in the classroom is not effective to use Google Translate especially when the teachers want to check the students' pronunciation through the use of voice input because it is very sensitive to every sound. If there are so many students speak together, the result will be in disorder, so teachers cannot check the students' pronunciation comprehensively.

2. It cannot be applied together in the class.

Since it is only able to be applied in a quite condition in the classroom, the students cannot practice pronunciation in the class well. This means when one students is practicing, the others should be quite and do not make any noisy. But if the teachers can manage the students in the class, this weakness may be able to be minimized.

3. The voice should be clear.

Comprehensible pronunciation is required. It will be difficult for the students whose voice is heavy, so their voice is unclear. Unclear voice will be difficult to get the best result. This can be caused by students' accent or intonation. Yet, this is why Google Translate is used, that is to improve the students' pronunciation ability to be able to speak intelligibly.

4. The voice input feature has not been provided in all web browsers.

Text-to-speech is probably provided in other web browsers like Firefox, etc. But the voice input is still provided in Google Chrome, so teachers cannot check the students' pronunciation through Firefox because it has not been provided with voice input. Therefore, teachers and students need to upgrade their web browser into Google Chrome.

CONCLUTION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

Honestly, the writer has not found any results of studies about using Google Translate in pronunciation teaching since what the writer finds is only the study about the translation result of Google Translate. That is the reason why the writer is interested to try this application as the media in teaching and learning activity. By knowing some strength above, the writer believes that it will be helpful to support teaching and learning instruction. It can help the teachers to give the chance for students to listen to native speakers' pronunciation. For the students, it can help them to improve their pronunciation skill. However, nothing is perfect. Yet, those weaknesses of Google Translate are able to be solved as long as the teachers are capable in managing and creating a good condition in the class.

B. Recommendation

Being courageous to use technology as teaching and learning media is needed to develop the education itself. So in the end of this writing, the writer proposes some recommendation:

1. For the readers
 - a. The readers who feel that there are still so many weaknesses about the content of this paper, they may give addition and suggestion to make better.
2. For teachers of ICT in language learning
 - a. Teachers need to be more creative in searching for and using ICT based media in teaching and learning instruction.

- b. With the necessity of pronunciation teaching, teachers are supposed to keep teaching pronunciation even though they do not have good pronunciation enough because they can use media to support their class.

3. For researchers

- a. It will be very important for the researchers to do further research about applying Google Translate in pronunciation teaching, so the real result about students' improvement in pronunciation can be measured.

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